



East Darling Harbour present + past + future

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Urban design, and design of the public domain must engage with time. A plan for a new piece of the city, designed in the present, must accommodate the potential for change—cities grow and flex to suit changes in the way we live and work. A good plan will also recognise and value those elements of the past that define a particular place.

The competition winning plan for East Darling Harbour will create a great public legacy for Sydney, addressing the needs of present and future generations, as well as addressing the heritage of the site (time past).

The design will:

- U Bring the city back into contact with the harbour
- U Make a generous new public realm that completes the layout of the city, creating multiple connections and linkages
- U Form a new relationship between the city centre, a public foreshore and the water's edge, creating a vibrant new place for Sydney
- U Provide new harbour front parklands, with multiple places, landscapes and opportunities to engage with the water
- U Give Sydney a great new street that complements Macquarie Street; defining the western edge of the city and ensuring that parklands will remain as inalienable public lands in perpetuity
- U Create public places and public rooms, to bring vitality and equity for all the people of Sydney, as well as special intimate spaces

- U that engage with local neighbourhoods
- U Generate a vibrant new city quarter, accommodating working, living, commerce and recreation within a generous and dignified public domain.

The plan has a robust structure that will allow development over time, with the flexibility to accommodate the changes in working and living that may occur over the time of development and beyond. It introduces a street pattern that integrates seamlessly with Walsh Bay, Millers Point, King Street Wharf and the western grid of the city centre to form a new unity. The north south street enshrines the western foreshore as public land.

The new urban quarter comprises 9 city blocks, divided into 20 lots accommodating over 40 buildings. Rational and coordinated, this structure is the ideal framework to deliver a genuine richness of architectural expression. Each project is free to contribute in its own particular way to the creation of an active, porous edge to the foreshore parklands and a dignified address to Hickson Road.

The network of streets creates an adaptable block structure open to future possibilities—it can accommodate changing demands of commercial work practices and related lifestyles. Every block can contain multiple building types, supporting a fine scale web of public spaces, squares and courtyards, lanes and walkways, colonnades and arcades, elevated gardens and stairs.

The plan includes a number of invited projects that demonstrate the capacity for diversity within the overall structure.

The future office 1 by Collins Turner is a garden tower—Sydney's first naturally ventilated office tower. This project advances the nature of the office environment, developing new ideas for its ecology and working patterns.

Future office 2 by Tony Caro is derived from the site's unique history and morphology, that facilitates fine grained multi level pedestrian connections to the city.

The community big house by Durbach Block is an emblematic building at the hinge point between commercial and residential. It is a public building providing a permanent point of reference, as other memorable buildings such as Customs House.

The order of staging of development and the public domain will need to balance competing requirements, timing services and infrastructure, balancing cash flow and development cycles, managing access and construction requirements, maintaining maritime uses and responding to the broader public interest. At the same time, it is important that staging should engage public interest, and make new spaces and opportunities for the public as soon as possible. This may be achieved by opening the empty cargo halls to public use, holding festivals and exhibitions, making some of the processes of building the parklands visible to the public.

The public domain is principally structured around our idea of the place of the site in the city, and its relationship to the harbour. It has been conceived as a rich framework of streets, parks and squares that accommodates the way we live now; but is enduring—able to change with changing attitudes, technologies and working lifestyles. It has the flexibility for staged development, and to be invigorated with

diverse design ideas, art projects, and a range of small architectural projects.

Design of the parklands has evolved from an exploration of place, the way we occupy the public realm, and of meaning.

Place—we sought to recognize, and respond to the physical realities of the site as it is now—it encompasses many of the challenges for greening urban sites—no soil, poor drainage, little water, and the possibility of a brackish and contaminated sub base. The design proposes innovative solutions for creating urban landscapes with minimal environmental impact.

The northern end builds on the conditions offered by the pre existing headland substrate—a mix of rock base and infilled areas.

As a result, the parklands have a distinctive terrain formed by the pod parks, the excavated water elements and the twisting forms of the headland—providing a foil to the vast horizontal scale of the site, without compromising the drama of the western water edge.

Occupation—The parklands are conceived as a series of public places, ordered somewhat by the way those places will be occupied—pod parks and squares in the busier city end transition to a broader landscape for community based activity, and the headland park that draws locals, Sydneysiders and visitors, and which celebrates the harbour.

The concept of time—related to occupation—has also informed the design of these spaces—the changes that will occur over short spans of time. The foreshore parklands will be activated in different ways over the course of a day and a week; the design seeks to understand changing use patterns and accommodate them with a series of flexible spaces. Spaces have been informed by observation of the way that key city parks are used at different times, and how those spaces have endured with the passing of time.

Overlaid on the need to facilitate recreation and leisure is the idea of meaning, connected both to the cultural context of social history and by what the harbour means to us now. Our relationship with the harbour goes beyond a view of the water—it is our nature/city harmony, a connection with wider nature. Design of the public domain engages with this relationship through a series of water edges let into the site—each with a different experience of, or story about the harbour.

The project reveals and reinterprets the many traces of the site's past; the scale of the Miller's Point headland with its successive shorelines; the elemental force of incisions into sandstone bedrock; the powerful horizontal datum of the wharf apron, the handmade topography of the High Street terrace and the austerity of Hickson road and the Hungry Mile. Site history is marked by substantive and decisive interventions, from streets and connections to projects in the foreshore parklands.

Container Park, and a series of crane sculpture designed by Jenny Turpin, in the busier urban precinct celebrate the recent industrial history of the site.

The headland park in particular engages with the past and the present. This section contains remnants of the original shoreline and subsequent sea walls, wharves and buildings. The lower piece becomes an archaeology park, where the lines of former sea walls and wharves are excavated and exposed—a place of exploration and discovery. A twisting edge of stone and concrete follows the old shoreline, creating a new elevated point park. The landscape image evolves from the family of surrounding promontories—Balls head, Ballast Point, Berry Island, Yuralbin, Goat Island and Blues and Peacock Points—green spaces atop a rocky shoreline.

The typical harbour landscape, celebrated in artworks but now largely lost in this part of the city, here becomes a contemporary terrain that folds upwards along the old shoreline, creating a landscape that mediates between the flat expanse of the platform and the cliff behind. ◦